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Wailoa Harbor Upgrade

Hilo's Wailoa Harbor gets \$500,000 upgrade

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Improved safety, access and convenience are the goals of a nearly \$500,000 upgrade to Hilo's Wailoa Small Boat Harbor.

The state Department of Land and Natural Resources has hired Isemoto Contracting Co. Ltd. to do the improvements under a \$489,664 contract, DLNR spokeswoman Deborah Ward said.

The contractor has already finished paying an area that expands the parking lot, she said. Fishermen can now use the enlarged lot to store their trailers and tow trucks.

The project also features a new wheelchair ramp next to the launch ramp. It's just one of the improvements that make the parking lot, restrooms and wash-down area more accessible to people with disabilities.

Ward said other work includes new water spigots within the enlarged parking area, improved drainage, and replacement of the makai-side dockside fender system, which prevents both boats and the dock from being damaged during high wind or waves.

"This project will provide boaters with improved parking space in the parking lot and improved flow patterns to provide safer and more efficient conditions for access, internal circulation and boat launching," Ward said. "This project will also provide accessible facilities, including an accessible route to the docks for the disabled. The wash-down facilities and drainage systems will be upgraded to improve sanitation and functionality."

Ward said the project won't be finished for a few more months, yet a check of the area Monday afternoon indicated much, if not all, of the construction work has been completed.

Calls to Isemoto were not immediately returned.

"I like it," fisherman James Chai said of the upgrades as he washed his boat at the harbor Monday afternoon.

"The pavement's better," he said. "It's good because it's not dusty when you wash your boat."

Still, the busy area could use a few more spigots, Chai suggested.

That was also the recommendation of Warren Walker, a part-time fisherman who was eating his lunch at the harbor Monday afternoon.

What's needed is a ramp with a more gradual slope so fishermen can more easily launch and retrieve their boats, he said.

Chai pointed to scrapes on the bow of his boat that he said were caused by the ramp's slope.



Roy Tanimoto, of Hilo, washes down his Boston Whaler at Wailoa Small Boat Harbor Monday afternoon. Wife Jo Ann gets set to snap a photo of her husband's catch, a 9-pound Kahala. The new water spigot used by Tanimoto is part of more than \$489,000 in upgrades to the small boat harbor being carried out by the state Department of Land and Natural Resources. WILLIAM ING/Tribune-Herald

Also, the area is now prone to illegal activity and is hotter because trees that provided shade have been removed or trimmed, Walker said.

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